

# Bard

Bard College  
**Bard Digital Commons**

---

Robert Kelly Manuscripts

Robert Kelly Archive

---

2-2011

febE2011

Robert Kelly  
*Bard College*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts](http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts)

---

### Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "febE2011" (2011). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 342.  
[http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts/342](http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/342)

This Manuscript is brought to you for free and open access by the Robert Kelly Archive at Bard Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Robert Kelly Manuscripts by an authorized administrator of Bard Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@bard.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@bard.edu).

# Bard

= = = = =

## **Holiest things in closest looking found**

transformed by touching you  
a touch knows everything  
a moment knows eternity  
glad touch

*split the stick and there I am*  
*crack the stone and find me*  
or in the water drop reflected  
all your mind can see

(so glad touched you)  
so you touch back  
I am the bright red thing  
made black against the morning snow  
a shaft of light

each color is a touch

every garment is protection and provocation

else why the luster of the human eye  
soft focus when you wake first up  
a child with his knuckles

rubs his waking eyes:

creates what he sees

for I was human once before the fall

before the touch

Ash Wednesday. Confused noises.

A crowd out of sight in a nearby street.

Square. Fountain. Still glad.

And from the broken night a dawn.

18 February 2011

= = = = =

We still want it simple  
to study till it blooms  
into galactic complexities  
of touch and letting go.

18 February 2011

= = = = =

Kingdoms totter now around the east  
men grow tired of the same old jailors  
spectacular assassinations

hold my hand  
for we have cracked the midnight open

there is no light inside a star  
light is the urgency arising  
from rushing from and coming towards

or speed *is* light

the solar flare of February  
ignited January's revolutions  
light hurrying to catch up with what we mean.

18 February 2011

## MATHEMATICS

Math is a mixture of shit and roses, bull's blood and sawdust caked on the chopping block of the mind. When you think *seven* you know all too much about intercourse. When you say *five* the knife is in your hand. Functions try to drink the sap of thought. Relationships between values are fantasies. The old-time counting numbers whoop it up around town. Any equation is a circus trick. A smiling girl in spangles topples through the air from trapeze to trapeze. Now will you listen to me? There is no safety net. Sit quiet beside me, close, close, until the space between us approaches zero. You will and I will never understand.

18 February 2011

= = = = =

## Marching to it never stopping

the words on the wall  
 come down at night and become your skin  
 to read is to touch  
 the far person who spoke so nearly  
 naked words the lonely skin  
 I can find you anywhere  
 you're like air,  
                     you're not special anymore,  
 you're god.

\*

A stance, a holy stance  
 of maybe, maybe apart  
 maybe in your lap,  
 a demon station where  
 you park your little car—  
*hear it right the first time*  
*anything I say—*  
 at the railroad crossing  
 the winking red lights the swing-down arm  
 diesel horn loud kiss at three a.m.

*tree I am*

the gulp of speed when all stands still  
wake up and touch

the bus took me to a strange city  
elegant restaurants in redneck country  
slept with the bus driver, her little kid  
slept under the fluffiest mound of blankets

but when I woke up you were there again,  
logical, contained,  
you are the mirror my reflection fills, no,  
you are the doorway that thrusts me out, no,  
in, no, no movement of any kind,

the dream barge stuck in the ice.  
but you were there, a vexation,  
curvaceous but annoying,  
you comma when I wanted a full stop.

\*

so slope stroking the sleek curve  
got me here, my GPS is buried in your meat  
whither thou goest I am compulsion  
a thousand times a day in front of you



I wash my hands before the marble doors

\*

*bagchak*, habit patterns

acorns crack these

in wood ash lye delete asperity

*I want you in the dark*

but slew the dark by mistake

instead of rebooting the desire

\*

so stand at the middle of yourself

and read the wall. Wherever on it

your shadow falls, just those words

are what you mean right now

and what the world is busy doing with you

even now in my hands

miles away the shadow of your body

falls on my breath

and all the other words you don't quite see

are past and future indifferently

you can choose the words

times places people mountain ranges seas

you can close your eyes

\*

you're out of town now

no-grass plain not the least romantic

not like a desert

a big fort is all that's there

a big grey fort on a dusty field

nothing in the distance

not a single flag on the tower

the fort is built out of cardboard

the walls shiver in the wind. Quiver.

Tremble. What do walls do

in the wind? No words on these walls.

Inside the fort are horses, real horses,

cavalry steeds brown and chestnut and bay,

they could easy trample those soft walls down

but they don't. They don't. They respect

the lines on which the walls are built.

The design. The design is what holds them.

Special lines. Even animals

know when things are special. We are held

in place by some design.

Break the teapot, stain the rug,  
thrill of disobedience, how dare you  
be deity? Stop smoking, I see you,  
you know I can see right through the wall,  
the words, real horses and they obey  
the mind of the wall because a wall  
distinguishes, a wall blesses and humiliates,  
a wall decides.

I hear those harps now  
you keep strumming, you can't fool me,  
music comes out of our bodies  
and only later finds a wind or string to say it,  
a bird to write it down perched on those phonelines  
stretched across the dusty plain—  
why do horses need a telephone?

There are no people here, not even men,  
the horses can't read the walls,  
they need people to read,  
horses learn human language from  
human butts and thighs that squeeze them,  
horses hear and learn, they hear by spine,  
poor personless horses trapped in a flimsy house.  
Like them, we are total prisoners  
of what we think. Of the words we can't read.

\*

So blame Parmenides and not for the first time.  
 You see him on his tarot card, piloting his chariot  
 endlessly foxed by duality and foxing us.  
 There were no horses before Parmenides.

Women stayed home in their opulent palazzos  
 and men schlepped along their carts  
 or shoved them onward  
 loaded with acorns and bricks and ripe melons  
 like a thousand years ago when I was young,  
 the pushcarts on Blake Avenue.

\*

You don't reincarnate as only one new  
 being necessarily. The more complex  
 the habitual patterns you set up in this life  
 the more incarnations will be needed  
 to accommodate the problems that you are.  
 Or the magnitude of your perfections.  
 A great man might be reborn as dozens  
 of children all over the world when his *namshe*  
 goes nuclear, his consciousness makes theirs.  
 No wonder the population keeps increasing  
 as each existent consciousness grows complex.  
 You will be reborn as many. Already your

habitual patterns for good and ill  
“embrace multitudes.” What Whitman  
maybe didn’t even know he meant.

19 February 2011

## BLUE LIGHT

Blue lights in little cages  
 blue lights in tunnels  
 old IRT Borough Hall

whoever

put them there installed  
 magic-in-childhood rooted  
 deep lasts forever.

Magic

whether it works or not,  
 magic *means*. Magic  
 gives *intensity* to experience  
 which is remembered as *significance*  
 even if most of the time  
 it is carrying a blank sign.

The blue light coming through  
 the blue glass lily vase  
 says me Brooklyn says me a child  
 seeing for the first time  
 these *principles of infernal optics*,  
 kindly light of those below the ground:

*Our sun is blue*  
*and never burns you*

*our sun is dark inside  
and lights your way*

*to joy inside yourself  
deep as Pisgah on a rainy day.*

20 February 2011

= = = = =

There are alternatives to everything.

Wind. Wind comes from hawk wings  
beating in vain at the gates of heaven.  
Music of the stars. We won't let  
raptors in, too delicate  
the eggs of light.

We look  
out at the starry skies on clear nights  
the way a beetle surveys a cornfield  
incomprehensibly large and everything right here  
right in our claws  
that mysterious light

and we break it with our bodies, and we say  
those are our shadows, they belong to us and no one else.

Tiny squeal of big hawks and eagles—  
infants banished from the mother's breast,  
the milk they yearn for hides in the highest places  
where the thin air won't lift even their wings—

we are battered by our little reach.  
We beetle along in the furrows of splendor



guessing hard and never knowing,

wink the blue light in, mother, lure me inside  
where there is no limit to my becoming.

20 February 2011

**Dear Thinking**

I am drinking  
from your cup and thinking  
about your lips all ways  
so generous in adversity  
of not having you to think

and Chinese characters all over  
the world as the academician says  
gets weirder every minute  
what do those banners in  
Benghazi really signify

who can read the people  
of a language or the birds  
who bring heaven so nearby  
nearly the whole sky  
fits on my backyard

sure as the coffee in the cup  
fresh ground from the Afric horn  
where poetry first sounded  
and men praised gods and long  
horned cattle and their wives

so great Thinking could drink me dry.

21 February 2011

## TRIGONOMETRY

It comes out smut today

as if the almost dozen monkeys of the day

*11 ba'ts'*

were fed up with all this purity

snow and snow forth and peaky skies

and want some excitation,

*une unzaine de singes*

each with a window of his own, a snapshot,

his hands full of fingers,

the way for instance

the sun looks when it first

breaks through this cloud, a rough smudge,

a battered rose, red welt, a wound of color

bruising the eye.

Bad stuff, natural stuff.

Enough of the natural and the fitting and the measured.

We want to run around

be difficult and creepy, sly even.

Hurt but never harm.

Only the natural kills.

21 February 2011

= = = = =

Everything is white.  
Even the dark  
wood paneling  
gives off light.  
Winter sheen.  
If it gets any softer  
this will turn into Chinese.

21 February 2011

= = = = =

What does 'world' mean?

Everything is on time.

Pale distances.

Snow on hillside

over stream.

A phone rings

only to remind.

Voices in the snow.

The Buddha's head

and shoulders over it.

3 August 2015

## VANDALS COMING FROM AFAR

But if a day is your body  
I am at your lips now  
listening to what I taste.

And only if.  
My eyes want to close  
but even more they want to know—

how can I choose  
the news? Paleface manners,  
feel entitled to everything.

I am Sheherezade come back to life  
not a sultan in sight  
just you to make me write.

21 February 2011